Talking about voluntary action and the welfare state: Looking back and looking ahead

30 April 2019
Programme

Chair: Susanne Rauprich

- Preliminaries and warm up (15 mins)
- Presentation and discussion (45 mins)
  - Introducing the study
  - Highlighting individual narratives
- Break (15 mins)
- Presentation and discussion (45 mins)
  - Cross cutting themes, emblematic moments and enduring issues
- Significance and implications (20 mins)
- Next steps and close (10 mins)

Warm up

On your tables, please answer the following questions.....

What **five words** come to mind when you think of the **welfare state**?

What **five words** come to mind when you think of **charity**?
ESRC-funded Discourses of Voluntary Action project

• Examining the debates that have taken place on the role, position and contribution of voluntary action in the provision of welfare in the 1940s and 2010s – two transformational moments

• Comparing and contrasting public, state/political and voluntary sector discourses over two time periods

• Using *three* narratives: public, state, voluntary sector
Project Partners

- Co-producing knowledge with: NCVO, Children England, UK Youth and Age UK
- Mass Observation Project – new directive commissioned 2018
- Archive and expertise of former chair of NCVYS (1937-2016)
- Project Steering Group chaired by Professor Marilyn Taylor
Part One - Emerging Findings:

Insights into different narratives
1940s
• Second World War (1939-1945) revealed new social needs (children in residential care, older people) prompting research, media coverage and calls for reform

• Beveridge led wide-ranging inquiry published 1942 ‘A revolutionary moment in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching.’

• Other inquiries and reports influenced the ambitious social welfare legislation programme of Churchill’s wartime coalition and Attlee’s Labour government
State narratives: Cradle to grave?

• 1945 Labour government under Attlee enacts ambitious legislative programme **expanding state’s role in welfare** – but...

• ...Voluntary action **embedded in British culture** – the voluntary spirit will endure
  • Meeting additional needs
  • Innovating (‘blazed trails’)
  • Nursery of democracy (‘schools in the practice of democracy’; ‘debating ground’)

• ...Neither the state nor voluntary organisations **can provide welfare services alone**
  • Need for partnership (‘[state] can not cover the whole field of human welfare’)
  • Particular role for voluntary organisations in leisure and provision for youth and child-care

• **Challenges the idea that Labour was hostile towards voluntary action**
The State has taken over many things which occupied the philanthropists of the early nineteenth century—elementary education and housing, for example.. .That means merely that there is a perpetually moving frontier for philanthropic action. . . [B]ut there will always be fresh pioneering things to be done by voluntary action.

Lord Beveridge, House of Lords Debate on Voluntary Action, 1949 (HL Deb 22 June 1949 vol 163 cc75-136)
**Public narratives: Cold as charity?**

### Social welfare: expectations
- All writers reflect an **expectation of change** to welfare, but political affiliation shapes views
- Sense of expectation and **rights** to social welfare services, health care & social insurance
- Questioning what **beneficiaries** should expect – the minimum? Or more generous?
- **Outstanding needs identified** – nurseries; youth clubs/youth work; help for older people

### Charity: future role?
- Many writers are **supporting charities** whilst waiting for legislative change
- Considerable discussion about the **projected future of charity**: No longer needed? Topping up the state? Meeting new need?
- Questions of **trust**: Charity-racketeering; administration and efficiency; charity functions
- Concerns about **charitable giving** (e.g. flag days, door-to-door collections, appeals); **street begging**; and **deserving / underserving poor** (e.g. discourses of scroungers)
- Class differences in views on need, giving, mutual help & aid

### Sense of transition and some confusion (and ambivalence) as to how the welfare state & its relationship with voluntary organisations will develop
Voluntary narratives: Coordinating the voluntary movement

• Increasing importance of coordination between voluntary orgs – united voice to government

• ‘Standing Committee of Voluntary Organisations in Time of War’ and new infrastructure bodies, e.g. National Council of Associated Children’s Homes

• Focus on post-war planning from 1940 – voluntary movement to play ‘valuable part’ in reconstruction

• NCSS led movement through Beveridge’s Voluntary Action Inquiry & subsequent Nathan Committee and eventual reform of charity law

• Laying groundwork for formation of voluntary sector?

NCSS headquarters in Bedford Square was the centre of the voluntary movement
Voluntary narratives: Defending the role and contribution

- Of ‘service to nation’ during war and reconstruction - essential for a democratic society
- Pioneering to meet new needs, e.g. Citizen’s Advice and National Old People’s Welfare Committee
- Continued service delivery needed during war and post-war austerity
- Partnership between voluntary agencies and the state was ‘perhaps the most fundamental question of all’
- Making important contributions to the design and implementation of post-war social welfare policy
2010s
Context

• 2008 financial crisis
• Formation of 2010 Coalition Government - ideology of austerity and spending cuts unprecedented in modern times
• UK a more multicultural, pluralistic society with a changed relationship between citizen and the state
• Rise of national populism, while Labour party shifting left under Jeremy Corbyn
• May’s minority government, with Brexit dominating recent political discourse
State narratives: from Big Society to Civil Society Strategy

Early 2010s
• Promoting the ‘Big Society’ – state failure, social action and new responsibilities for citizens and communities
• Open public services and social investment – ‘broken’ system, choice, blending financial return and social impact, building a market open to all

Mid-2010s
• Sticking to the knitting – increasing antagonism e.g. Lobbying Act, contract clauses
• Need to strengthen governance and leadership – e.g. House of Lords Select Committee

Late 2010s – coming full circle?
• Collaboration and co-creation – e.g. Civil Society Strategy - social value, responsibility, accountability, removing bureaucratic interference
Public narratives: Thinking about welfare & charity

Five words for welfare state
- care
- benefits
- safety
- support
- care

Five words for charity
- volunteers
- help
- giving
- caring
- donations
## Public narratives: Resonance with the 1940s

### Welfare state:
- Sense of **transition** & desire for change – **welfare state in crisis** – no agreement as to what to do, polarised views on future of welfare state
- Conservative voters favouring less/little govt intervention, and others favouring more
- **Recognising the impact of ‘austerity’**: homelessness; poverty; food banks; universal credit; loss of youth services; Sure Start
- **Questioning rights** to welfare; also concerns over **erosion of rights** to welfare; deserving/undeserving poor; benefit scroungers
- All recognise need for social care for **older people**, but some intergenerational differences

### Charity and voluntary action:
- **Support for** and involvement in voluntary orgs widespread amongst writers
- Some discuss **erosion of rights** to welfare, and **charitable provision** becoming **‘the norm’**. Concerns about **capacity of voluntary action** to make up for state failure
- Raising questions of **trust**: Scandal; administration costs; efficiency
- **Concerns about charitable giving**: chugging; guilt; celebrities; and **street begging**

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Tension in discourses - **distrust of beneficiaries**, even amongst left-wing writers. **Class background important** - few writers describe experience of unemployment and/or poverty
Relevance and role of charities?

“In broad terms the aims of the welfare state are to ensure that the population has its basic needs covered for shelter, food and warmth.”
(L1991, female, 81, retired nurse, Conservative)

“In my opinion then, the relevance of charity in Britain today is that it is compensating for the Government’s negligence in looking after its citizens properly.”
(B3327, male, 51, administrator, Liberal/Labour)

“… the welfare state does too much for people. It’s looked to by too many people as a first resort rather than a last resort. They don’t just expect to be provided for, but they demand it as they consider it their right”
(W3163, 60, GP receptionist, Conservative)
Voluntary narratives: back on the defensive?

- ‘Unsettlement’ following period of growth; expansion of infrastructure support; ‘mainstreaming’; partnership; and ‘strategic unity’ during New Labour era
- Sense of vulnerability and fragility: changing funding sources and mechanisms; scandals; concerns about public trust; struggling to engage with government
- Differentiation and fragmentation? Big versus small; national versus local; differences across policy fields
- Dismantling of infrastructure: closures; mergers; restructures; refocusing; repositioning
- Organisations on the defensive? Securing future; strengthening governance and leadership
Unifying strategic narratives?

• It’s a challenging time for voluntary action – austerity (less funding, more demand), sector agnosticism, ‘bad media’, threats to public trust and confidence

• Voluntary action is essential to democracy, but its important campaigning and advocacy role is being stifled / weakened

• Voluntary action has a role to play in transforming public services: prevention, reach, innovation, voice – BUT different positions across the sector on what this should look like

• Voluntary action complements, but differs from, the state and the market, yet distinctions are being blurred – need to chart a new relationship - BUT not clear what this should look like

• Universal welfare system under threat, at time when needs are rising –BUT muted debate?
Round table discussions (1)

• What do you think about the material presented here? Does it **resonate** with your understanding of the issues?

• What are the **commonalities & differences** you see when comparing the 1940s with the 2010s?

• What **other insights** or questions arise?
Part Two - Developing lines of analysis

Overarching themes, illustrated through

‘Enduring issues’ – broad themes running across both time periods but which may show different features in each

‘Emblematic moments’ - dilemmas, events or interventions which somehow capture the debates and issues of a particular time
### Context matters in developing discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1940s</th>
<th>2010s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shift to the left</td>
<td>ongoing rightward shift</td>
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<td>social democratic, state expanding, welfare project</td>
<td>neo-liberal, state retrenching, welfare project</td>
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<tr>
<td>collectivist spirit of reconstruction</td>
<td>individualist/populist spirit</td>
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<td>austerity...</td>
<td>austerity...</td>
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<td>role of the media</td>
<td>role of the media</td>
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<td>trust in charities</td>
<td>trust in charities</td>
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<tr>
<td>a pragmatic partnership between the state and voluntary action</td>
<td>an increasingly antagonistic environment for voluntary action</td>
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Enduring issue: public trust

- Public scepticism and annoyances around charities in both periods – fraud, abuse, fundraising/chugging and costs
- But in 2010s this appears to have more of an orchestrated/political edge, e.g. criticism from the right on campaigning and advocacy: ‘Sock puppetry’, ‘stick to your knitting’, Lobbying Act
- Charity ‘scandals’ and media amplification, e.g. CEO pay, fundraising, the demise of Kids Company, Oxfam and safeguarding
- Concern about apparent decline in public trust
- Policy focus on governance and leadership in the sector, and new regulatory mechanisms
- A myth-busting communication drive to improve understanding of charities amongst the public
A significant role in shaping narratives & influencing policy

Different dimensions of shaping and influencing:

- Depends on organisations’ resources, networks, access and connections
- ‘Insider’ and ‘outsider’ strategies – committees, consultations, lobbying, campaigning, thought leadership
- Policy influence work may seek to align with a prevailing ‘current’, or seek more fundamentally to resist or change it
- How conducive the policy and political environment is for lobbying, campaigning and advocacy
Emblematic moment: Older people and National Assistance

- **National Assistance Act, 1948**
  - end of the Poor Law
  - required LAs to provide residential care (but could be sub-contracted to voluntary orgs)
  - provision for vol orgs to deliver welfare services e.g. meals on wheels, home help, old people’s clubs

- A *better Act* because of amendments made by National Old People’s Welfare Committee
  - Generally informing the Act through expertise
  - Specifically enabling the form and funding of local non-residential welfare services

- Act *warmly welcomed* by NOPWC, it provided ‘fresh opportunities for cooperation’

- Not a straightforward transfer of responsibility, but new recognition of need ‘to make up for inadequate effort to meet the needs of older people’

- Shared understanding that needs exceeded what state could meet alone, within context of austerity
The ‘moving frontier’ is fluid, complex and contested

• The simple version – a single line with the state on one side and voluntary action on the other

• A complex version –
  1. Always in motion and always in a state of tension – challenges over meaning and movement
  2. Disaggregating the state and voluntary action across different fields
  3. Blurred and hybrid arrangements and partnerships, rather than a zero-sum relationship (where more of one implies less of another)
  4. Complicated relationships involving activities and services, but also financial flows, regulatory requirements, degrees of control and the wider tone of discussion.
  5. Other actors and sectors are also implicated in any frontier-work, such as private firms, professional bodies and trade unions – not just a state-sector binary
Emblematic moment: Reforming children’s social care as a line in the sand

- 2014 DfE’s proposals to enable local authorities to outsource children’s services
- Children England (and others) launched vigorous campaign. Key concern potential for profit and third party involvement
- Proposals amended: profit-making not allowed
- 2016 proposed Children and Social Work Bill: ‘developing innovative new organisational models...potential to radically improve services’
- Opposition again mobilised – CE joined a coalition of 40 orgs: ‘unprecedented constitutional change’
- Lords voted against the power to exempt LAs, but clauses re-inserted in the Commons
- Opposition re-mobilised - eventually government withdraws proposal entirely
- Complicating factors... different third sector positions
Roundtable discussions (2)

- What do you think about the material presented here? Does it *resonate* with your understanding of the issues?

- What for you might be the ‘*emblematic moments*’ which somehow stand for, or say something about, the debates in the 1940s and 2010s?

- What other ‘*enduring issues*’ would you highlight as running across the two periods of time?

- What *other insights* or questions arise?
Roundtable discussions (3): Implications

• What might our findings mean for your own work? And for others?

• What is the relevance of the historical work within this project for your current practice?
Thank you!

Come to our end of project conference, 2\textsuperscript{nd} July, Friends House, London

For more information on our research see: https://discoursesofvoluntaryaction.wordpress.com